

NEW BOOKS AND REPRINTS.

A new edition of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam comes from Houghton, Mifflin & Co. It is typographically and in general make-up a dainty little volume, and it possesses some special advantages textually. The editor gives first the text of the fourth and last edition, then that of the first edition, and finally a number of new literal renderings from the original Persian, intended to indicate the extent to which Fitzgerald departed from the sense and the matter of his author. These final notes also show when and where the translator has interpolated stanzas not in the original, and offer an instructive comparison between his work and methods and those of Whinfield's translation. Perhaps the chief value of collating the first and fourth editions consists in the light it throws upon the practice of poetical revision. Mr. Fitzgerald adds one more to the long list of melancholy illustrations of the imprudence of tampering with the results of the original inspiration. By far the greater number of the alleged emendations in the fourth edition are changes for the worse, and the only real improvements consist in the addition of wholly new stanzas. The literal translations appended to this edition serve to show that though Mr. Fitzgerald certainly took great liberties with "Old Omar," as he used to call the Astronomer-Poet, he succeeded in preserving the spirit of the original in a remarkable degree, and did no violence to its doctrine.

William S. Gottsberger publishes "Pictures of Hellas," being five tales of Ancient Greece, translated by Mary J. Safford from the Danish of Peter Møller. The author's plan is unconventional. He throws out of his stories back into the Pelasgian period, and in all of them avoids the usual method of trying to reconstruct ancient Greek society from an archaeological point of view. Mr. Møller's stories are fluent, easy, elastic and interesting, the characters possessing a vitality the like of which is generally conspicuous in the absence of the average attempt to depict the life of extinct civilizations. Whether he has really succeeded in representing ancient Greek life is, of course, quite another consideration, though not one of great importance, seeing that it is in the nature of the case indeterminable.

Under the title "Roman Mosaics" (Macmillan & Co.), the Rev. Dr. Hugh Macmillan has collected a number of papers on various aspects of the Eternal City. The subtitle— "Studies in Rome and its Neighborhood," and perhaps this is a better one than "mosaics," though there is literally some talk about Roman mosaics in the book. As the visits whose results the author gives were made twelve years ago, no mention need be expected of any recent changes, but the subjects which occupied the Doctor's attention are those upon which time works little or no alteration. He discusses the churches, the Appian Way, the Cumæan Sybil, mythical footprints in Rome, the Forum of the Obelisks, the marbles of Ancient Rome, Tasso and St. Onofrio, the Vatican Codex, the Painted Tomb at Veii, Hooded Stones and Martyr Weights, and various other local subjects. The author writes an agreeable style, is well informed, and, while his work is anything but a hand-book, it may prove useful and suggestive to those who visit Rome.

Messrs. Estes & Lauriat, of Boston, have republished in a handsome form "Birds in Nature," a collection of talks upon bird life by R. Bowdler Sharpe, of the Zoological Department of the British Museum. The title may prove misleading, since Mr. Sharpe's talks of only thirty-nine birds, most of which make their homes in the British Isles, or at least spend sufficient time there between migrations to become closely identified with the country. Concerning the habits and peculiarities of these birds, Mr. Sharpe discourses in an amiable and not uninteresting manner, with "popular information" evidently as the end in view. Mr. Sharpe takes pains to acknowledge in his preface that he is indebted to Mr. Henry Seebohm for some of his descriptions, but we must confess that his pride in his own honesty seems unalloyed. There are thirty-nine chromolithographs plates reproducing colored studies of birds, by P. Robert, who has also furnished many head and tail pieces. The book is well made, and those who are interested in the birds of the mother country and the Continent will doubtless do well to consider the illustrations of Robert and the text of Mr. Sharpe.

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